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JESUS HUMAN AND DIVINE

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O U T L I N E

JESUS HUMAN AND DIVINE

I. Introduction

A. Purpose of the Study.

B. Statements Concerning the Interpretation of the Synoptic Gospels.

II. Jesus in the Synoptic Gospels.

A. The Human Portrait of Jesus.

B. The Interpretation of the Divinity of Jesus by His Early Disciples.

III. The Attempted Academic Proof of the Divinity of Jesus is Unsatisfactory.

A. The Virgin Birth.

B. The Miracles.

IV. Summary.

INTRODUCTION

JESUS HUMAN AND DIVINE

Introduction

It is impossible for us to draw a line between the humanity and the divinity of Jesus because it is in his humanity that we find his divine character, and it is in his human deeds that we see the glory of God's work. It is only in his very human personality that we see the personality of God.

From the first century to the present day the great problem among the theologians has been as to whether Jesus is human or divine, whether he is God manifested in flesh or the one who has two natures in one body, or whether he is only a man, good and ideal. Professor Lewis says, "Any representation of Christianity which eliminates from the work and the Person of Christ the specific activity of the Divine cannot do justice to the total facts. That is why Unitarianism has persistently failed to satisfy the Christian consciousness except within a quite limited range."(1)

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(1) Lewis, E., Jesus Christ and the Human Quest, p.291.

At the same time if we, as the Docetists, forget the historicity of Jesus with the high exaltation of the glorified Lord, our faith cannot endure permanently because it also has lost the fact on which the basis of our faith should be laid.

The purpose of this study is not to discuss the problems mentioned above, but to trace how the manhood of Jesus was a tacit and self-evident assumption to the disciples and yet to see how that same Jesus was the Christ and divine to the same group of people. The materials used will be limited to the facts as recorded in the synoptic Gospels.

Statements Concerning the Interpretation of the Synoptic Gospels.

The Synoptic Gospels, like the rest of the New Testament, are not the mere historical records nor the mere biographies of Jesus. They were written for a practical, evangelistic purpose. Inspired by the great personality of Jesus, Mark, Matthew and

Luke took the pen and used it freely and bravely to portray the impressions they had received from him. Their desire was to make their own experience available for all mankind.

"He (Mark) has a specific Christology; Jesus was Son of God (i.e. one with God in nature) even while on earth, and is so addressed at the Baptism, the first recorded incident of His life. Mark draws Him as He appeared to contemporaries, living out the truth of Divine Sonship. .....While the general conception has close affinities with Paulinism and the Fourth Gospel, the human limitations of this Divine personality are not forgotten. .....In Matthew, on the other hand, Jesus appears as the fulfilment of Old Testament hopes and Messianic prediction; He is the Son of David and of Abraham. But though the true Christ of prophecy, with a special mission to Jews, He has been rejected by His own nation and has in consequence established a Kingdom of all peoples. The name Immanuel (God-with-us) belongs to Him. Matthew strongly inclines to omit statements of Mark which might seem incongrous with a proper reverence for Jesus' person,

and gives prominence to our Lord's place as future Judge. Luke, while not obtruding a Christology, seizes every opportunity to accentuate the universality of Jesus' mission. He is the Son of God, seeking all men; hence His genealogy is traced not merely to Abraham, but to Adam. The evangelist's chief interest centres in His supernatural healing ministry. Both Matthew and Luke narrate the Virgin-birth, thus apparently referring Jesus' special Sonship to His birth from the Spirit."[1] In this way the facts are sometimes over shadowed by their own faith, illuminating and idealizing. And yet their faith, their religion, is based on the fact, the person of Jesus himself. Hence, it is not hard to see the humanity of Jesus in the records of these Gospels.

Jesus in the Synoptic Gospels

Before the time of Jesus innumerable people had died on the cross. But it was the death and the cross of Jesus only which gave Paul new

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(1) Mackintosh, H.R., The Doctrine of the Person of Jesus Christ. P.5,6, foot-note.

life, new power, love, joy, peace and freedom. The stories of the appearance of the dead after death had always existed but it was only the fact of Jesus' appearance three days after his death which opened the eyes of the disciples and the people of the last 2000 years and let them see and receive immortal life. The reason was simply that back of that death and that cross there was the incomparable personality of Jesus; back of that appearance was the life he had lived among them. "The influence of Jesus is more than historical; it is also what may be called superhistorical or in one aspect timeless and eternal. But yet this very quality of timelessness, whereby He becomes the contemporary of all ages, and touches sinful hearts in every land, conveying to faith the life of God, is something which only secured its foothold in the world through its actualization as a real element in the time series, a perfect earthly medium of grace. Had Jesus' manhood been fictitious or abridged, no fully saving power could pass forth from Him to win mankind."(1) In order to appreciate

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(1) Mackintosh, H.R., Ibid, p. 385.

the full power of Christ we must first know the humanity of Jesus.

The Human Portrait of Jesus

To the apostles Jesus was human. No matter how highly they glorified and deified him, their faith was firmly based on the fact of his manhood, which fact the Gospels reveal without any hesitation.

Jesus was born as a "helpless" baby. (Matthew and Luke give us the miraculous birth which will be discussed later.) His father was Joseph; his mother, Mary. 1) He had brothers who were called James, Joses, Judas and Simon; he also had sisters. 2) It is not unusual to find boys and girls who are very unlike their parents; still, one expects to find a good child in a good home. It is only natural to find such a boy as Jesus, whose picture Luke gives us in his record in a home where there is a mother like Mary. The sight of an innocent baby perfectly happy and

peaceful in the arms of a loving mother gives heavenly joy; but the thought of a woman bearing another life within her body gives a feeling of sublimity and awe. She lives not only her life alone, but another life, a pure life which cannot be explained, but must be called a gift of God. No wonder that her hope and joy must have been great! At the same time how she must have trembled with the fear for the greatness of her responsibility for cherishing the holy life which God had trusted in her hands. When Mary realized the new life within her, her heart was filled with - we have no words with which to express her feeling which was not only of joy or of fear alone, but of some mysterious wonder. Some artists have painted pictures of Mary which show that supreme moment of a woman's soul. How often must the tears have shown in her eyes when she stopped her busy hands at spinning! Would that we might have heard her voice as its prayer arose when she paused a minute before she drew the water! "Mary carried him (Jesus) not merely in her body but on her heart, she by her prayers and rapturous

anticipations of future greatness for the child cooperated with the spirit of God to bring it to pass that, that which was to be born of her, should be called holy, the Son of God; Mary kept all these things and pondered them in her heart."[1] How deeply do we hope that the song of Mary at Elizabeth's home will become the song of all the mothers of children through out the ages!

"My soul doth magnify the Lord,
And my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Savior.
For he hath regarded the low estate of his handmaiden:
for, behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed.
For he that is mighty hath done to me great things; and holy is his name.
And his mercy is on them that fear him from generation to generation.
He hath shewed strength with his arm; he hath scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts.
He hath put down the mighty from their seats, and exalted them of low degree.

(1) Lewis, E., Jesus Christ and the Human Quest, p. 306.

He hath filled the hungry with good things;
and the rich he hath sent empty away.
He hath holpen his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy;
As he spake to our fathers, to Abraham, and to his seed forever." (1)

The day came when Jesus must leave his mother, and when Mary could not understand his ideal and could not bring him back (2) to his old work as in the olden days.(3) But we believe that she gave to the boy Jesus her best influence while he was within the home.

Jesus' conception of God as Father seemed very natural; and his relation with that Father seemed to grow very naturally and in a normal way. Can we say that his attitude toward God was a natural outgrowth of his relations with his earthly father Joseph? His parables show his deep appreciation of fatherhood. Through them we can picture Joseph as a wise and loving father. Not in a rich but in a happy home in Nazareth Jesus

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(1) Luke 1:46-55.
(2) Mark 3:31
(3) Luke 2:51

grew to be a man.

How different the world must have appeared to the boy Jesus when his parents took him to Jerusalem! The buildings, the people, the roads, the children, the games and the things that people talked about all differed from what he had seen and heard in his home village. The carpenter boy had so many things to watch and listen to that he forgot to go home with his company. His parents worried when they found that he was not with them. He needed the same care from the parents that any other twelve year old boy needs. His parents found Jesus and he went home with them and he was obedient to them. Listening and watching, playing and working, Jesus' world had become wider. Luke presents a picture of the very beautiful but very normal natural growth of Jesus' boyhood. "He increased in wisdom and in stature, and in favor with God and man."(1) All that necessity of learning which belongs to human life and experience belonged to him.

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(1) Luke 2:52.

His physical life was equally under the control of the natural law. He knew what it was to hunger; what it was to get a cup of cold water when thirsty. His body grew wearied after long continued toil. When sorely wounded on the cross, he thirsted, died, and was buried. He was authentically man in the physical sphere.

How about his social life? He lived in the fellowship of home and friends. There were friends who understood him[1] and those who did not understand him.[2] Hatred of enemies[3] and love of friends[4] alike entered into his life.

Jesus was human in his emotional life. Joy[5] and sorrow,[6] sympathy[7] and wonder,[8] flowed from his daily life. He respected[9] John the Baptist when he saw his dauntless courage and his whole-hearted loyalty to his conviction. John touched the heart of Jesus; his influence upon the young carpenter was truly great. When the crowds who followed Jesus appeared as sheep without a

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(1) Luke 22:28
(2) Mark 3:21
(3) Luke 19:47
(4) Luke 8:1-3
(5) Luke 10:21
(6) Mark 14:34
(7) Mark 1:41, 6:34, Luke 7:13.
(8) Matt. 8:10
(9) Matt. 11:11

shepherd, his heart was moved. The hour of rest which he and his disciples had been seeking was changed into an hour of teaching.

What depth of feeling can be heard in his words, "My heart is sad, sad even to death; stay here and watch with me."[1] "Are you sleeping, Simon? Could you not watch for a single hour?"[2] "Jesus had chosen three from the eleven because they were the earliest and the truest of his friends. He needed to feel their presence and their sympathy as he fought the temptation to run away that assailed him. He had not concealed from them the bitterness of his soul as he threw himself on the ground in their presence. Now he returns to lean for a moment on their love, and satisfy himself that though insight fails, love is sure, when lo! this revelation of obtuseness, of inability .... to enter into the fellowship of his suffering."[3] Jesus who was the friend of the friendless and of all who needed now sought for friends. He who prayed for others[4] asked his friends to pray for him.

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(1) Mark 14:34
(2) Mark 14:37
(3) Bailey, A.E., The Gospel in Art, p. 315.
(4) Luke 22:32.

His anger[1] his wonder, his love and his compassion all are familiar to every human life and experience. There is nothing new in their nature. Every wholesome emotion touched him, finding fit outlet in word or act.

Jesus had an unusual influence upon the souls and bodies of the people. This power, retold by the disciples, sounds sometimes as though he were omnipotent. A careful reading of the Gospels leads to a different conclusion. Jesus failed to win Nazareth and his own people.[2] Even his great personality could not reveal the glory of God where there was no faith which would respond to his faith. The mother of Zebedee and her two sons heard him answer, "It is not for me to grant seats at my right or my left hand." [3] It was true that his power was unusual, but not unlimited.

He had keen insight which penetrated into the hearts of people. But it was not supernatural; he was not omniscient. Did he not say himself clearly that "now, no one knows anything about that day or hour, not even the angels in heaven, but only

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(1) Mark 3:5
(2) Mark 6:5
Matt.20:23 (3)

the Father."[1] There are some passages which may seem to indicate his supernatural knowledge. "He knew what was in their minds; so he told the man..."[2] He knew what was in the mind of Simon when a woman anointed his feet, and also what was in the thought of the disciples concerning worldly position. But it is possible to say that if one's observations and interest are as keen as Jesus', his experience will naturally enable him to read the minds of others in such cases. His knowledge was not unlimited.

The illustrations which he used during his public ministry were what he had seen and appreciated in nature and in man. The birds in the air,[3] the flowers by the wayside,[4] the growing seeds in the fields [5] spoke to him of the goodness of God and the loving care of the Father. He loved nature. He watched it with thoughtful eyes, and found truth in it. It is noticeable that a large number of his parables are based on natural phenomena.

Jesus' teachings and parables reflected that familiarity with the common life of women and

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(1) Mark 13:32.
(2) Luke 6:8
(3) Matt. 10:29
(4) Matt. 6:28
(5) Mark 4:26-28.

children, of peasants and carpenter, and of all classes of people around him, which can be gained only by a man who has a deep love and interest in humanity. A picture of two women grinding together at the mill,[1] and of the heating of the oven[2] appeared in his teaching. What did he learn when he watched a woman making bread[3] or mending old clothes?[4] He did not forget the innocent joys and sorrows of the children playing games in the corner of the street. He understood the heart of a woman when she had lost a coin and found it again.[5] No one would be able to give the parable of the prodigal son if he lacked keen observation and the understanding of the human heart. How well is the deathless love of a father pictured in that story, which portrays at the same time, the saddest and ugliest phase of the human heart, in the attitude of the elder brother. Jesus was not a psychologist as such, but his words penetrated into the minds and hearts of people because he loved them; he was true to life; his words came out of his heart and life. He was not a philosopher, but eternal truth was

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(1) Luke 17:35.
(2) Matt. 13:33.
(3) Matt. 13:33.
(4) Mark 2:21.

found in him because he was a lover of truth. No one loved the truth as he did, and no one lived it as he did. Apart from the Old Testament, his education was not confined to books; he found it where he could - in home and shop, in nature, in man, and in the market-place.[1] It was an unusual, a wonderful achievement, but it was done by the normal methods which are known to human experience.

The same can be said about his knowledge of the Bible. In a home like that of Joseph and Mary, Jesus must have begun to learn the Scripture as soon as he began to speak, as this was according to the Jewish law.[2] However "it is certain that he did not take up a formal course of study, or attend a rabbinical school elsewhere. His townspeople knew him only as a carpenter and were surprised that he should come forward in the synogogue as a teacher."[3][4] Then how could he master the Scripture so thoroughly as he did? His spontaneous and proper use of it was surprising. The secret lay not in how well he was acquainted with the verses, but in how he read and interpreted and, above all, lived it.

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(1) Glover, T.R., The Jesus of History, p. 35.
(2) Deut. 6:6,7.
(3) Mark 6:2,3.
(4) Gilbert, G. H., The Student Life of Jesus, p. 39.

It is no wonder that the people, when they heard him speak, said "He spoke as one who had authority and not as a scribe."[1] Truly there is a surprising authority in his words; and it is there because they were not merely the sayings he had read in the Scripture nor the words he had learned from others, but the very expression of his experience which had been tested in his own life. To summarize what we have already studied we may quote what Professor Sanday said, "We may venture to picture to ourselves the working of our Lord's consciousness in some such way as this. His life on earth presented all the outward appearance of the life of any other contemporary Galilean. His bodily organism discharged the same ordinary functions and ministered to the life of the soul in the same ordinary ways. He had the same sensations of pleasure and pain, of distress and ease, of craving and satisfaction. Impressions received through the senses and emotions awakened by them were recollected and stored up for use by the same wonderful processes by which any one of us

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(1) Matt. 7:29.

becomes the living receptacle of personal experiences. His mind played over all these accumulated memories, sifting, digesting, analyzing, extracting, combining, and recombining. Out of such constituent elements, physical, rational, moral, and spiritual, character was formed in Him as in any one of ourselves, though with unwonted care and attention. Not that we need suppose that the actual process of character forming was more self-conscious with Him than it is with us. The forming of character is the unconscious automatic effect of particular decisions of judgment and acts of will. Conscience discriminates between right and wrong; in His case it invariably chose the right and eschewed the wrong. But out of the midst of all these moral decisions and actions, out of the interplay of social relations, under the guidance of observation and reflection, there gradually grew up a sense of deliberate purpose, a consciousness of mission."(1)

Prayer Life of Jesus

Professor Baillie expressed his opinion

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(1) Sanday, W., Christologies Ancient and Modern, p.179.

as opposed to those in the letter of Pope Leo I to Bishop Flavian of Constantinople when the said, "We hardly know whether it is more wrong-headed to find in the hunger and thirst and weariness the characteristic marks of true humanity or to find in the glittering miracles the characteristic marks of divinity. Hunger and thirst and weariness are the marks, not of our humanity, but of that brute nature that we share with the beasts, and unless we rose above these to higher spiritual potencies, we should not be worthy to be called men at all. The perfection of Christ's humanity was thus seen, not in the animal needs and weakness of His physical constitution, but in the upward and Godward striving of His spirit..."(1)

Through out the history of mankind it is obvious that the desire for something higher has its foundation in the very nature of man. There is no man in human history who has aimed at a higher goal and has striven more sincerely and achieved more perfectly than has Jesus Christ. "For Jesus, religion in its highest attainment is the perfect cooperation

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(1) Baillie, John, The Place of Jesus Christ in Modern Christianity, p. 127.

of the human with the Divine, of man with his maker."[1] This religion he achieved and in order to achieve it there were the days of struggle and difficulties. It seems that his most sincere effort in achieving his heart's desire appeared in his prayer life.

Jesus was a man of prayer. He prayed; he needed to pray; and he lived in prayer. What he spoke, what he did, what he planned and taught, was done with prayer, came out of prayer. His very being was the product of his prayer - the normal, personal, intimate communion of Father and son. All three Gospels begin Jesus' public ministry with his baptismal experience at the Jordan river. This baptism was only another phase of his prayer life. Luke draws our attention to the fact that the Spirit of God descended upon him when he was praying.

No evangelist tells why Jesus was baptized except Matthew. Concerning Matthew's statement[2] Professor Bundy says, "He introduces

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(1) Bundy, W.E., The Religion of Jesus, p. 203.
(2) Matt. 3:14-15.

a special scene in which the Baptist recognizes Jesus as the One he really is and confesses that Jesus has no need of his baptism of repentance unto the remission of sins. In this scene Matthew deposits his own faith and lays down the first great Christian declaration of the sinlessness of Jesus."[1] This is Matthew's faith about Jesus.

The churches throughout the ages assert the sinlessness of Jesus. Was his baptism a dramatic method of his own public exaltation? Did he desire John the prophet to proclaim him the Messiah? Did he wish to present an example in doing all things well? All these questions seem not sufficiently noble, honest, strong, or meaningful to be the motive of such an act of such a man as Jesus. "He had come," say Middleton Murry, "as more than a sinner, but as a sinner he had indeed come. Whatever this man was, he was the incarnation of honesty. He would have sought no baptism for the remission of sins, had he not been conscious of sin."[2] If John's baptism was for

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(1) Bundy, W.E., Our Recovery of Jesus, p. 115.
(2) Murry, J.M., Jesus, Man of Genius, p. 22-23.

nothing but the remission of sin, this might have been true. But if it was true, it is very strange that there is no trace anywhere in the Bible that he was conscious of sin. Both his friends and his enemies asserted his sinlessness. Of course, there is the invented sin by which the priests and the scribes tried to remove him from the world and the people. If one's imagination can be allowed free reign here, we may see Jesus standing in the river Jordan, sad and perplexed, knowing only the pressing needs of the world and his desire to help. "Father, whatever power I may have is Thine, my heart, my soul, my body, all are for Thy task. I come to thee, Father, to do thy will." Could this have been his prayer when he stood with John in the water? Professors Bundy, Bowie, and others do not regard Jesus' baptism as a repentance but as his attitude due to his pious religious consciousness. Professor Gilbert says, "It may best be regarded as an act of consecration."(1)

What ever his motive might have been, the significance of Jesus' baptism is what happened to

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(1)Gilbert, G. H., The Student's Life of Jesus, p. 50.

him at that moment and what it meant to him and to the world.

Jesus saw the heavens rent asunder, saw the spirit descend, and heard a voice say, "Thou art my beloved son, in thee I am well pleased." This experience must have taken place in Jesus' inner consciousness, because no one saw the dove descend or heard the voice. No one acted as if he saw the heavens rent except Jesus. It was Jesus' experience and his alone. This story must have been told to the disciples by Jesus himself in his last days. He must have used very vivid expressions to tell them of the thrilling moment of his inner experience at the Jordan River. It is said that "the confession of Peter at Caesarea Philippi was in all probability the first occasion on which the Messiahship of Jesus was made the subject of conversation by the Master and the disciples."(1) This might have been the time when the disciples heard about their master's experience at the Jordan River and also in the wilderness.

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(1) Mackintosh, The Doctrine of the Person of Jesus Christ, p. 18.

Jesus had known God as his Father and had recognized his fellow-men as God's children and his brothers. He had known that he and the world needed God and that they could not live without Him. But that day he realized God's personal and particular relation with himself; he discovered the dependence of God upon him, His urgent need of Jesus. The realization must have come to him at that moment that it was his duty, which God entrusted to him, to take upon himself the task of the Messiah whom the world throughout the ages had been eagerly and patiently awaiting and to whose coming he himself had been looking forward with sincere prayer. It would seem that the grandeur of his new task called forth every bit of his intense desire for adventure just as one's soul rises up full of power and vigor when he realizes that one, whom he loves more than his life, needs his love and help. It is obvious that the rest of Jesus' life was centered about that one desire to accomplish loyally and perfectly the duty which God had entrusted to him that day. Jesus, a carpenter of Nazareth, had

to be the kingdom builder.

The Wilderness Experience

The realization of the greatness of his responsibility did not allow Jesus to go back to his people. It drew him apart from the world. Jesus wanted to be alone, alone with God, and to think things through with Him. This was the period of his trying out and testing himself in the light of God's character. No matter what the cost, he must seek the will of God and do it, even though he must pay for it through the loss of home, fame, or life. He did test every part of his thoughts, his plan and his method, and did not stop until he brought himself into entire accord with the will of God. After forty days of strenuous prayer, Jesus reached certain clear and unalterable conceptions. He saw that the inner hunger of the human soul was more fatal than mere physical hunger. The world needed personality; the building of character must be placed first. No matter how urgently people

might cry, he must not put the secondary things in the place of the primary ones. Man shall not live by bread alone.[1]

The Old Testament teaching came to his mind. When he discovered that it could not be identified with God's character he firmly put it aside. No, curiosity never could save the world. He must appeal not to the eyes but to the hearts of the people. If it were God's will, he would willingly forsake popularity rather than make trial of the Lord his God. Though it might appear to the world and even to him, as utter failure, he would leave all in the hand of God the Father.

The world would bow to him if he first yielded to the popular conception of God. But God is love; God's kingdom must be ruled not by force or power, which would give fear to people, but by love through which they would receive peace and joy in their hearts.[2] God and God alone should be worshiped.

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(1) Luke 4:4.
(2) Barton, G.A., Jesus of Nazareth, p. 122.

Thus after many days of struggle he came out of the wilderness with the joy and power which can be experienced only by those who are certain that what they have chosen is the very thing God would have them choose. Luke tells us that Jesus returned in the power of the spirit.[1] But his temptation was not limited to the wilderness. As Luke stated, the devil departed from him for a season.[2] The Synoptics record that often Jesus faced the same kind of suggestions which had come to him in the wilderness; and in each case, as in the wilderness, he chose his step with prayer. It is obvious that Jesus' decision to leave Capernaum and go to the next towns to preach,[3] and his selection of his fellow-workers[4] were the results of prayer. He needed to be alone with God and ask His aid at the time when the people's wonder was at its height.[5] The figure of Jesus praying is found in Caesarea Philippi,[6] Mount Hermon[7] and in the Garden of Gethsemane.[8] Jesus' life was full of prayer; his very being was the product of his

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(1) Luke 4:14.
(2) Luke 4:13.
(3) Mark 1:35-38.
(4) Luke 10:1-4.
(5) Mark 6:45,46.
(6) Luke 9:18.
(7) Luke 9:28,29.
(8) Mark 14:32-35.

prayer. "Prayer" says Professor Bundy, "is the most distinctive feature of that human attitude which we call religion."[1] "The religious consciousness" says the same author, "is peculiar to human experience. It springs from a genuine sense of native and natural limitation. Without a startling sense of serious limitation the religious consciousness would be an impossibility. It appears in both primitive and cultured religion."[2] It is true that the multitudes were astonished at his authority. He was not afraid to say, "Ye have heard that it was said by them of old.....but I say unto you." There was no hesitation when he changed the tradition which had absolute authority for the Jewish people, and said, "The Son of man is Lord of the Sabbath."[3] What a wonderful confidence he had when he demanded absolute obedience from his followers.[4] Picture Jesus as he stood in the temple facing all religious leaders of that age. His perfect calmness and silence in front of Pilate and the soldiers seems almost divine. But it must be remembered that "beneath this assurance that marks his every act

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(1) Bundy, W.E., The Religion of Jesus, p. 170.
(2) Ibid, p. 141.
(3) Matt. 12:8
(4) Matt. 19:29,30.

and attitude there is that foundation stone of a sublime and reverent humility - a deep dependence upon God whom he worships, loves and serves."[1] Jesus' prayer in the Garden shows the real human struggle to achieve divine will. "The human Christ prayed, not in order that He might furnish a model to His disciples, but because to Him prayer was an inward need and duty."[2]

The Interpretation of the Divinity of Jesus by His Early Disciples.

Jesus was a human being physically, mentally, spiritually and socially. To cut off the historicity of Jesus from Christianity means to cut off the nerve of its vitality and make it lifeless. But at the same time we can not miss the great transcendent power in Jesus Christ without cutting the principal root of Christian faith.

The purpose of the New Testament is to cause the people to believe in the divinity of Christ

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(1) Bundy, W.E., The Religion of Jesus, p. 149.
(2) Mackintosh, H.R., The Doctrine of the Person of Jesus Christ, p. 406.

whose power alone can save the world and can lead a man into the right relation with God. It is not easy to know definitely when and how his followers began to think about Jesus in terms of divinity, because each of the Gospels was written with the desire to make its author's experience available for all mankind after the apostles had fully recognized Jesus as divine. Mark seems to date the divine sonship of Christ with his baptism; Matthew and Luke carry it further back to his birth. We all know that John's fourth Gospel carries it still farther back than any of the first three. However, the attitudes, the thoughts, and the words of the disciples as they appear in the Gospels prove that they did not come to recognize Jesus as the Son of God until some time after his death.

Peter at Caesarea Philippi answered Jesus' question and said, "Thou art the Messiah." But it is very clear that his conception of Messiahship was entirely different from that of Jesus. When he was told about Jesus' idea of Messiahship

he could not only not understand it, but he rebuked Jesus. Even on the way to Jerusalem only a few days before Jesus' death, the disciples' minds were filled with ambition and the desire to possess high honor. When he was arrested, they fled and left him alone in the hands of his enemies. Peter denied him in Caiaphas' yard. Where were the disciples when their master was breathing his last breath?

It was true that their love, their trust in, and their reverence for him was deep and sincere; they devoted themselves to their Master loyally. They had left their homes and possessions with great expectations for the future. But Jesus' death on the cross put an end to all the hopes of the disciples. What Cleopas said on the way to Emmaus expresses the thought of all the disciples who were in despair at his death. "To God and to all the people he was a prophet strong in action and utterance, but the high priests and our rulers delivered him up to be sentenced to death and crucified him.

Our own hope was that he would be the redeemer of Israel; but he is dead; and that is three days ago."[1] It was their helpless cry over a vanished cause. They were afraid of the priests, of Roman power, and of the crowds, All gathered together and hid secretly in a room.

But a very strange thing happened. Jesus appeared to his old friends. At first he appeared to a woman,[2] or to two[3] or more women[4] who came to the grave at the dawn of the first day of the week; then to Simon[5] and on that same evening to the two disciples on the way to Emmaus.[6] Still other appearances followed, some by the Lake of Galilee[7] and others in Jerusalem.[8] At first the women trembled and were afraid.[9] The disciples did not believe their friends' words and thought it was simply idle talk.[10] They did not know what to do with this witness. But each one due to his own experience which came to him gradually, realized that the Master was indeed risen. One heard

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(1) Luke 24:20,21.
(2) John 20:11
(3) Matt. 28:9
(4) Mark 16;1
(5) Luke 24:33,34.
(6) Luke 24:13-32
(7) John 21:1-22
(8) Luke 24:36-43
(9) Mark 16:8
(10) Luke 24:11

him call her very name with his old friendly voice. Others saw him at the supper table when they offered grace just as in the days of his flesh; then for the first time they noticed how they were thrilled when their hearts were led to listen to the old Scripture teaching. The doubting Thomas learned the eternal truth that blessed are those who believed though they had not seen him. They all heard the voice which said, "Peace be unto you. Why are ye troubled?"(1) "Fear not,"(2) "I am with you always, even unto the end of the world."(3) These are the words they never could forget.

Concerning the manner, the members and the orders of Jesus' appearances the records of the evangelists are very ambiguous, but it was the truest fact that Jesus "in his own unmistakable self, made the disciples certain that he was there." (4) This direct awareness of the living presence of their risen Jesus gave them now light which enabled them to see what they had not seen before. They had looked upon the Master's cross

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(1) Luke 24: 34-38.
(2) Matt. 27:5.
(3) Matt. 28:20.
(4) Bowie, W.R., The Master, p. 310. Matt. 28:1-10. Luke 24:1-12. Mark 16:9-14.

with tearful eyes; but their tears of sorrow had now changed into tears of joy, because they recognized a divine glory in it; they saw there the love and purpose of God. The meaning of their Master's death was revealed to them by the new light. Then for the first time they understood the kind of kingdom Jesus had meant, and the kind of Messiah he had claimed to be and was. The cross became the center of their religion. In the light of their Easter experience they looked back at the life of Jesus and could clearly discern in it the will and purpose of their Master and his God. These had existed always but they had not before been able to see it. When they remembered the words of their Master, they heard God's voice; in the Master's thought, they found God's thought; in the Master's deeds, God's deeds; in the Master's love, God's love; in the Master's suffering, God's suffering; and in his death, they saw the eternal grace of God and of Jesus. In a word, the disciples saw God in Jesus Christ. Truly, as Professor Brown says, "The effect of the Resurrection was not, as we are sometimes told,

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to establish the fact of a life after death, still less was it to satisfy men's curiosity as to its nature. It was rather to shed new light on the meaning and value of life here." (1) The same author says that the resurrection restored the disciples' lost confidence.(2) Yes, the Easter light brought to them a life and hope which were more Christ-like and God-like in nature and power. The disciples in the light of their Easter experience saw Jesus as the Son of God, as Christ, the Savior. They heard him call once more "Follow me"; and this time the disciples, with all their heart, soul, strength and mind followed, never to leave him alone, but always to go wherever the Master led - whether to prison, to Calvary, or to the cross.

It was really a wonderful thing for those disappointed people to see the risen Jesus and to proclaim that death could not arrest the life of their Master. But it was still more wonderful that the character and life of those who saw the risen Jesus were changed. All the epistles

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(1) Brown, W.A., The Christian Hope, p. 98.
(2) Ibid, p. 99.

and the book of Acts reveal the new life of the evangelists. It was Peter who first stood up to proclaim publicly the resurrection of Jesus, and how God had made this Jesus both Lord and Christ.[1] As Kirkland says, "The first disciples were not only mad enough to preach the resurrection but mad enough to live it." [2] "The deniers of Jesus became his confessors; those who fled from him in his sufferings now rejoiced that they were counted worthy to suffer for his sake. The very men who were vexed with ambitious schemes and tormented with the desire of superiority are now planning for the spiritual good of mankind, are starting an enterprise for the benefit of the world, and stand ready to devote themselves to death in the service of this sublime ideal. ..... still further, these men are formed into a church; they undergo wonderful spiritual experiences. Through their representatives they persuade multitudes to join them." [3] What a great and sudden change came to the life and person of Saul! The man who persecuted the

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(1) Acts 2:36.
(2) Kirkland, W., The Great Conjecture, p. 64.

Christians gave his life for Christ. His life was changed from misery to happiness, from fear to peace, from death to life. His zeal for destroying the people's faith was changed into zeal for a constructive power in men to enable them to live a perfect life in union with Christ. If those disciples and Paul were asked what had happened to them to bring about these changes, they would with one accord have answered and said, "Jesus is risen. We saw him. He is the Son of God, Christ the Savior." And again they would have declared, "If Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain; and your faith is also vain."(1) It was truly the resurrection which restored the disciples' lost confidence, which revived and transfigured their hopes with which they boldly went out to conquer the world. Here one must remember that it did have power because it was the resurrection of Jesus; had it not had the person of Jesus at the back of it the resurrection story must have vanished with many other ghost stories. Criticising Wrede's contention

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(1) I Cor. 15:14.

about the resurrection, Professor Sanday says, "It is true enough that the belief in the Resurrection bore a great weight of superstructure in apostolic times. But I doubt if at any time, from the first century to the twentieth, it has ever had so much weight thrown upon it as in this theory of Wrede's. It is not only the foundation stone, but apparently the sole foundation of the whole edifice of Christianity. Does Wrede really believe this? Supposing that the Resurrection accounts for the rest of Christianity, what is left to account for the Resurrection? For the ordinary Christian it is prepared for and led up to in a hundred ways; but I think Wrede may fairly be asked what he has left to lead up to it, The elephant stands on the tortoise; but what does the tortoise stand upon?"(1) "What gave Jesus' Resurrection its unique significance" says Professor Brown, "was its setting in human history, its relation to that which had gone before, and to that which followed after and, above all, the nature of the person who was

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(1) Brown, W. A., The Christian Hope, p. 101.

raised."[1] "All believed that he was the world's Savior and Lord because of what he was and did, and because of what he could bring men to be and to do."[2]

The disciples saw God in Jesus. When they followed Jesus, they found they were following God; when they strove to be like him, they found they were striving to be like God. When they obeyed and lived as he had taught them, they found coming into their lives results which they thought only God could effect. Thus gradually through these experiences with the Master the believers came to find the divine in Jesus, to think of him in terms of God, and to speak of him as heavenly and eternal. Even Paul and John, who most eagerly exalted Jesus, never took God's highest seat for their glorified Christ,[3] but their belief in Jesus' divinity was so firm that no subsequent experience was able to shake it. Nothing could change their faith because it was based upon fact - the words, the deeds, and the spirit, or

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(1) Brown, W.A. The Christian Hope, p. 101.
(2) Lewis, E., Jesus Christ and the Human Quest, p. 260.
(3) Romans 8:31, 32. John 3:16.

rather the whole person of Jesus. That faith was strengthened and deepened by their experience which was daily renewed and which had grown richer and more wonderful.

In conclusion we should like to quote two professors. "The history of the Christian story of Jesus during the first century of its existence is the history of the gradual obscuration of fact from his life by faith in him as the Christ of the Easter experiences. Slowly but surely, Jesus as religious subject loses ground before Jesus as religious object." (1) "The question whether they were well or ill advised in their affirmation of His Divine being is one which necessarily is insoluble by the methods of historical science. Then as now, only those could attain to evangelical faith in the Godhead of Jesus who knew that in Him they had met with the Father. Nothing but irrefragable religious experience will explain the amazing fact that, without a tremor of hesitation, the apostles took the responsibility of asking men to believe in Christ as Son of God

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(1) Bundy, W.E., Our Recovery of Jesus, p. 121.

from all eternity." [1]

The Attempted Academic Proof of the Divinity of Jesus is Unsatisfactory

The Virgin Birth

"According to a universal belief of the historic Christian Church" says Professor Machen, "Jesus of Nazareth was born without human father, being conceived by the Holy Ghost and born of the virgin Mary." [2] It is true that to certain Christians the story of the Virgin Birth has given such satisfaction that they think that this fact is the only thing which gives them the explanation of Jesus' possession of the unique nature and divine character ascribed to him. On the other hand, this very story becomes, to other types of people, a stumbling block, because "there are many by whom the belief in the Virgin Birth is used to discredit the whole of Christianity. They refuse to accept the claims of Christ because those

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(1) Mackintosh, H.R., The Doctrine of the Person of Jesus Christ, p. 35.
(2) Machen, J.G., The Virgin Birth, p. 1.

claims appear to rest on what is to them an incredible foundation." [1] And yet there are still some others who consider this Virgin Birth as the song of those Christians who were deeply impressed with the divine character of Jesus Christ. It was the song dedicated by them to praise his perfect, incomparable personality. Those people may say that Matthew and Luke "tell first what they learned last." [2] Not to question whether the story of the Virgin Birth is true or not, but to see what the New Testament attitude is toward this question, is the problem here.

At the beginning Matthew and Luke mention the miraculous birth of Jesus, but they never mention it again. Not only is that true, but, without paying any attention to this Virgin Birth story, the Synoptists bravely call Jesus the Son of Joseph and Mary, [3] and talk about his brothers and sisters [4] without giving any explanations. The words "thy father and mother" or "parents" are repeatedly used in Luke. [5] His mother and friends did not seem to treat him as a

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(1) Lewis, E., Jesus Christ and the Human Quest, p. 305.
(2) Ibid, p. 98.
(3) Luke 33.
(4) Mark 6:3.
(5) Luke 2: 41-51.

divine person. When they thought he was out of his mind, they came to take him back home, showing no special respect for him.[1] None of the rest of the New Testament touches on this problem at all. It is of interest to notice especially that John and Paul, who, more than any other, bring out the highest exaltation of Jesus, never speak about his miraculous birth. On the contrary, Paul speaks of Jesus in Romans, as the seed of David according to the flesh,"[2] and in Galatians as "born of woman"[3] which tells of his normal birth. He never refers to the Virgin Birth when he converts people. The story never occurs in his teachings about Jesus. John also says, "Jesus of Nazareth, son of Joseph."[4]

Hence it is obvious that the story of the Virgin Birth did not bring these followers of Jesus to serve him as their Lord and Master. Their belief in the person of Jesus does not seem to require the story of the Virgin Birth. These followers were more concerned with his personality,

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(1) Mark 3:21.
(2) Romans 1:3.
(3) Galatians 1:4.
(4) John 1:45.

his character, and his teachings than with the Virgin Birth story.

So far as the New Testament is concerned, the power, the influence, and the divinity of Jesus do not depend upon his Virgin Birth. If the early disciples did not regard this matter important, why should we emphasize it? If Mark, John, Peter, and James kept silent upon this problem, there should be no objection for others to follow their example if they choose to do so. The Virgin Birth story never proved Jesus the Son of God. He was the Lord and the Master independent of this question. However, there is a significance in this story of Jesus' miraculous birth which students of the New Testament must take into account. "The narratives of the Nativity are the fruit of early Christian piety at some of its best moments and in them there is deposited some very solid substance from the living body of the early Christian faith. They confront us directly with some of the most important early Christian convictions concerning the religious

significance of Jesus. In and of themselves, the Christmas stories are a tremendous tribute to Jesus, to the unique quality of his personality and character. It is of relatively few men in the world's history that such things have been told; of still fewer have such things been believed. The human race - ancient and modern, primitive and cultured - has always felt that the Divine was specially near in the life and work of its great heroes. Through the memories of such men inspired fancy has woven its fabric of fiction - fiction because it is far from fact, but true because it expresses valid convictions.

"The narratives of the Nativity, then, are the fruit and work of early Christian piety itself, the involuntary creation of the early Christian devotion and faith that attached themselves to Jesus, expressing themselves in a popular and poetic fashion. There is only one source of stimulation for the Christian imagination that is responsible for the Narratives of the Nativity, and that is Jesus himself, who he was and what these early believers discovered in

him. Jesus was not their author; they were unknown to him, yet he was their inspiration. Religious literature has its prose but it also has its poetry into which its poets pour the finest of their sentiments and spirit." (1)

The Miracles

In addition to his labor of teaching, the Gospels portray Jesus as a great healer. They extend his influential power not only to men but also to nature. The problem of the nature and the credibility of so-called miracles will not be discussed here, nor will the ways of their interpretation, but the problem of the unsatisfactoriness of miracles as a proof of the divinity of Jesus will be studied.

If it be true that more people were comforted, healed, and saved by Jesus than by

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(1) Bundy, W.E., Our Recovery of Jesus, p. 89.

any other man of that age, it was perfectly natural, because no man had a deeper interest in and stronger love for man than did Jesus himself. While the religious leaders of that age would pass by a man in trouble in order to keep their Law, Jesus stopped and even dared to break the old religious customs and traditions if it was to give help and life to a human brother. For Jesus, man was superior to the Sabbath,[1] the Law,[2] or to the whole world.[3] His joy and duty was to help those in need;[4] not to do good to a person needing aid was the same as to do him evil, hence neglect was sin for Jesus.[5] If an arrival of a trusted physician brings a soothing atmosphere to a patient's room, how much more could the presence of such a perfect man as Jesus bring to the world peace, confidence, hope and power to live.

The undisturbed calmness of the master in a tempest quieted down the confused minds of the disciples and enabled them to keep on sailing safely to the shore. Their fear of waves and winds vanished

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(1) Mark 2:28
(2) Mark 2:26
(3) Mark 8:36
(4) Mark 2:17
(5) Mark 3:4

in the presence of their confidence in the master.[1] When Jesus went into the country of the Gerasenes even a raving madman was quieted down and worshiped him. The influence of the perfect personality upon the disturbed mind was immediate.[2] How wonderful was the insight of Jesus when he said, "Your sins are forgiven".[3] It was a popular belief that disease was the punishment of sin and the work of demons. Jesus must have seen that the most urgent need of the man was some thing more than the mere desire to be healed. The proud scribes as well as the crowds were all amazed at the powerful authority of Jesus when the paralytic rose and walked home. One of Jesus' great achievements was to find the power of faith in others as well as in himself and to make use of it.

When the disciples saw in the light of the Easter experience these wonderful works of Jesus, they regarded them as signs of his divinity, and they emphasized them strongly. But it must be

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(1) Mark 4:35-41
(2) Mark 5:1-8
(3) Mark 2:6

noted that this was the attitude of the disciples and of the New Testament writers but not of Jesus. The people of his age loved and asked for signs,[1] but Jesus refused them more than once. His own attitude toward miracles is clearly shown in the first and second temptations,[2] and through out his life.[3] He cured the sick but it was because it was a part of his nature; it was due to his sympathetic love and not to a desire to prove his Messiahship. Did he not warn the disciples against overvaluing the power to heal?[4]

If miracles alone prove one's divinity, then a great many divine persons can be found even in the New Testament. The Gospels state that not Jesus alone but the Pharisees[5] and the disciples[6] also healed people, but people never believed in their divinity.

Professor Hill says that healing and cures of demoniacs seem to be a part of each day's regular work when Jesus was in Galilee.[7] Did Jesus really perform so many miracles as he says?

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(1) Matt. 12:38; Mark 8:11; Mark 15:32.
(2) Matt. 4:1-7
(3) Mark 1:38; Matt. 12:39.
(4) Luke 16:20
(5) Matt. 12:27
(6) Luke 10:17
(7) Hill, W.B.

Professor Vollmer counts thirty-six miracles in four Gospels. He says that eleven are recorded in all the Synoptists and that the rest are peculiar to one or more of the Synoptists; the fourth Gospel gives his own which are peculiar to him.(1) Regarding all these thrity-six miracles as dependable, and considering the period of Jesus' public ministry as thirty-six months, it would mean that he performed one miracle in each month. If the period of his ministry is cut down to eighteen months, then there must have been one miracle every two weeks. If miracles had to prove his Messiahship, he must have spent much time and strength in performing them whether the evangelists were conscious of it or not, they assume that Jesus rather avoided miracles.(2)

It is obvious that miracles were emphasized by the people but not by Jesus. If miracles were to prove his Messiahship, then they utterly failed, because people who saw his miracles only did not recognize the divine

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(1) Vollmer, P., The Modern Student's Life of Christ, p. 308.
(2) Matt. 4:1-7; Mark 1:38; Matt. 12: 39; Mark 7:27.

personality of Jesus but took him to Calvary and crucified him. Professor Gordon says, "The world of Christian faith does not stand or fall with miracle;" [1] and again, ".....the message of Jesus Christ to the world is independent of miracle, lives by its own reality and worth, self-evidencing and self-attesting."[2] The miracles of Jesus may express a part of his character but they will never be able to prove his divinity.

The Summary

For the Apostles Jesus was human not only in appearance but in experience. It was for them a tacit and self-evident assumption. They had no mind to prove his humanity. The disciples followed Jesus just as the students follow their teacher. They shared their lives with him and he with them, both in joy and in sorrow. Their close personal contact increased the friendship between them as the days past by.

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(1) Gordon, G.A., Religion and Miracle, p. XVIII.
(2) Ibid, p. XII.

Following him, their life and experience were deepened and enriched. Jesus became their joy, their comfort, their strength. Their minds were filled with ambition just as were the other young followers of the great master.

The day came when Jesus was arrested and condemned to death. He died on a cross in company with two thieves. This was a great shock to the disciples. It was truly a blow to them to see their master, the strong, loving, kind, sinless, and perfect teacher, die this shameful death. Their dreams dissolved. All their hopes died with him. Nothing but doubt, fear and sorrow were left to them. "I go a-fishing," said Peter a few days after their master died; and the sad, disappointed disciples followed him.

But a strange thing happened. The same small group of cowardly men started about the world to preach, to convince, and to conquer it. Jesus had risen. They had had experiences with him that convinced them that he was risen. The stumbling

disciples arose again to follow the risen master, never to go back to their old life. The resurrection is not a problem of physiology. It is the problem of whether the life which Jesus lived, the truth of God which Jesus revealed with his whole heart, mind, strength, and soul lives; whether death can put an end to that truth. A small group of men gave to this question the strong and bold answer, "No." They followed their living Lord. Following Him they, with God-like spirit, could love and serve the world which crucified their Master. The living presence of Christ constantly renewed their life. When they obeyed Him, they found results in their lives which they thought only God could effect. When they experienced Jesus as the perfect source of power which can abundantly meet the needs of human life, they could not think of any other kind of God except one like Christ. In other words, they saw a Christ-like God in Jesus. "Jesus is the Son of God, the Christ and the Savior" was the conclusion of their experience with him.

It is more than clear that no disciples became the followers of Jesus on account of the manner of his birth. His birth story had nothing to do with their belief in his divine personality; their friendship, their love, their trust in him were never increased nor interfered with by it. It was true that Jesus' healing and his great influential power deeply moved the hearts of the disciples but these were only a small part of Jesus. The multitudes of people of his time were surprised on hearing him and seeing what he had done for others, but those who saw the Divine glory in Jesus' deeds, his words, and his life were only those who could see behind them the person who was greater than the sayings, the deeds, the life, the suffering, and the death. The cross and the resurrection could give life and power to the disciples because they were the cross and the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Thus the disciples found the Divine character in Jesus' humanity, the glory of God's work in his deeds, and God's love

and God's spirit in his love and his spirit. Thus they met God in Jesus' very human personality. Their faith in the divinity of Jesus was based upon his whole self, and that faith was proved by their personal experience.

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